

# VISTA PSYCHOLOGICAL & COUNSELING CENTRE

# F O C U S

## HOW HUMILITY MAKES YOU GREAT

In light of the upcoming presidential race and the increase in narcissism amongst our youth, I think it's safe to say that, as a society, we could use a little more humility. Our culture places so much value on external accomplishments, appearance, and self-aggrandizement – all things that are ephemeral at best – that even a small display of this quiet virtue can make one feel like a drowning man coming up for air. Yet why can it be so challenging for us to express humility? Is it because we often misinterpret its active demonstration to be a sign of weakness, when in actuality it is an indication of tremendous inner strength? **Why is humility good?** When I meet someone who radiates humility, my shoulders relax, my heart beats a little more quietly, and something inside me lets go. Why? Because I know that I'm being fully seen, heard, and accepted for who I am, warts and all – a precious and rare gift

that allows our protective walls to come down. Truly humble people are able to offer this kind of gift to us because they see and accept their own strengths and limitations without defensiveness or judgment – a core dimension, according to researchers of humility, and one that cultivates a powerful compassion for humanity. This kind of self-acceptance emerges from grounding one's worth in our intrinsic value as human beings rather than things such as six-figure salaries or the body of a movie star or climbing the corporate ladder or the number of friends on Facebook. Instead, humble people place high value on more meaningful things that benefit others, such as noble qualities. They also see life as a school, recognizing that while none of us is perfect, we can, without negatively impacting our self-esteem, work on our limitations by being open to new ideas,

advice, and criticism. This ability alone cultivates an awe-inspiring inner strength, the most powerful example of which is Gandhi, whose *Autobiography* is a journey of humbling self-dissection. He once famously said, "I claim to be a simple individual liable to err like any other fellow mortal. I own, however, that I have humility enough to confess my errors and to retrace my steps." If Gandhi is an example of what a humble leader can accomplish, then society serves to benefit from this kind of governance. Consider what researchers of the "quiet ego" – a construct similar to humility – suggest happens when we gain control of our ego: we become less likely to act aggressively, manipulate others, express dishonesty, and destroy resources. Instead, we take responsibility for and correct our mistakes, listen to others' ideas, and keep our abilities in humble perspective.

SUMMER 2016

*Hold strong to  
your  
CONVICTIONS.*

*Remain humble  
in your  
SPEECH.*

*Let your actions  
tell your  
STORY.*

*Unknown*

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## HOW HUMILITY WILL MAKE YOU GREAT (CONT'D)

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 that kind of leadership for our country—and the world? But the benefits of humility do not extend to just our leaders. Recent research suggests that this lovely quality is good for us individually and for our relationships. For example, humble people handle stress more effectively and report higher levels of physical and mental well-being. They also show greater generosity, helpfulness, and gratitude—all things that can only serve to draw us closer to others. Given what scientists have discovered about humility, it's evident that cultivating this quality is not for the faint-hearted, nor does it appear overnight. Yet it would seem that one of the great rewards of humility is an inner freedom from having to protect those parts that we try to hide from ourselves and others. In other words, we develop a quiet, understanding, and compassionate heart. Here are some scientifically-based ways to start. **1. Embrace your humanness.** For many, when we fail at something important to us—a job or a relationship, for example—our self esteem plummets because we tied our self-worth to those things. All of a sudden, we become bad or unworthy people, and it can be a long road to recovery. Not so for people with humility. As stated earlier, their ability to withstand failure or criticism comes from their sense of intrinsic value of being human rather than out-

er means. So when they fail at a task or don't live up to expectations, it doesn't mean that there is something wrong with them. It just means that they are human like the rest of us. Scientists suggest that this intrinsic value stems from secure attachment, or the healthy emotional bond formed with close others, usually our childhood caregivers. Having the experience of unconditional acceptance and love, particularly when we're young, can serve as a buffer against the effects of criticism or failure. Unfortunately, many of us did not experience secure attachment when we were children. One study found that a whopping 40 percent of adults are not securely attached but thankfully this does not mean we are doomed. We can heal through healthy adult relationships, such as friends, romantic partners, or even with a higher power.

### **2. Practice mindfulness and self-compassion.**

These days, mindfulness and self-compassion seem to be the antidote for many of our inner ailments. Yet I can't imagine developing humility without them. According to scientists, humble people have an accurate picture of themselves—both their faults and their gifts—which helps them to see what might need changing within. Mindfulness grows our self-awareness by giving us permission to stop and notice our thoughts and emotions without judgement (if we judge what's going on

inside us, we paint a distorted view of ourselves). The more we become aware of our inner lives, the easier it is to see where unhealthy beliefs and actions might be limiting us. Noticing and then accepting those parts of ourselves that are wreaking havoc and that require us to change calls for self-compassion, or treating oneself with kindness and understanding. Once we accept what needs changing, then we can start the process of transformation. I love the saying by a wise sage, "If you are in a dark room, don't beat the darkness, with a stick. Rather, turn on the light." In other words, just gently and patiently replace a negative thought or action with a positive one and over time, we may not even recognize the person we once were. **3. Express gratitude.** Saying "thank you" means that we recognize the gifts that come into our lives and, as a result, acknowledge that value of other people. Very simply, gratitude can make us less self-focused and more focused on those around us—a hallmark of humble people. Indeed, a recent study found that gratitude and humility are mutually reinforcing. Expressing gratitude can induce humility in us, and humble people have a greater capacity for conveying gratitude. Both gratitude letters and gratitude diaries were used in this study—easy to perform practices that are described in greater detail in GGSC's Greater Good in Action web-

site. Perhaps the key to humility is seeing life as a journey towards cultivating those qualities that bring out the best in ourselves and others and make this world a better place. And this journey is not just for the average person, but one that many of our greatest leaders have embarked upon. To close with the words of one who knew humility, Nelson Mandela: "As I have said, the first thing is to be honest with yourself. You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself... Great peacemakers are all people of integrity, of honesty, and humility.

Source: Vicki Zakrzewski, Ph.D., education director of the Greater Good Science Center. Greater Good Newsletter, January 13, 2016.

[www.greatergood.berkeley.edu/humility](http://www.greatergood.berkeley.edu/humility)

Work for a cause, not  
for applause.

Live life to express,  
not to impress.

Don't strive to make  
your presence  
noticed,  
just make your  
absence felt.

Unknown

## LIFE SKILLS FOR 18-YEAR-OLDS: A CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS

If we want our kids to have a shot at making it in the world as 18-year-olds, without the umbilical cord of the cell phone being their go-to solution in all manner of things, they're going to need a set of basic life skills. Based upon my observations as dean, and the advice of parents and educators around the country, here are some examples of practical things they'll need to know to do before they go to college—and here are the crutches that are currently hindering them from standing up on their own two feet: **1. An 18-year-old must be able to talk to strangers**—faculty, deans, advisors, landlords, store clerks, human resource managers, coworkers, bank tellers, health care providers, bus drivers, mechanics—in the real world. The crutch: We teach kids not to talk to strangers instead of teaching the more nuanced skill of how to discern the few bad strangers from the mostly good ones. Thus, kids end up not knowing how to talk to strangers—respectfully and with eye contact—for the help, guidance, and direction they will need out in the world. **2. An 18-year-old must be able to find his/her way around** a campus, the town in which his/her summer internship is located, or the city where he/she is working or studying abroad. The crutch: We drive or accompany our children everywhere, even when a bus, their bicycle, or their own

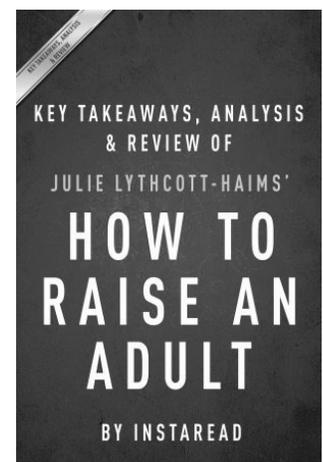
feet could get them there; thus, kids don't know the route for getting from here to there, how to cope with transportation options and snafus, when and how to fill the car with gas, or how to make and execute transportation plans. **3. An 18-year-old must be able to manage his assignments, workload, and deadlines.** The crutch: We remind kids when their homework is due and when to do it—sometimes helping them do it, sometimes doing it for them; thus, kids don't know how to prioritize tasks, manage workload, or meet deadlines, without regular reminders. **4. An 18-year-old must be able to contribute to the running of a house hold.** The crutch: We don't ask them to help much around the house because the check-listed childhood leaves little time in the day for anything aside from academic and extracurricular work; thus, kids don't know how to look after their own needs, respect the needs of others, or do their fair share for the good of the whole. **5. An 18-year-old must be able to handle interpersonal problems.** The crutch: We step in to solve misunderstandings and soothe hurt feelings for them; thus, kids don't know how to cope with and resolve conflicts without our intervention. **6. An 18-year-old must be able to cope with ups and downs** of courses and workloads, college-level work, competition, tough teachers,

bosses, and others. The crutch: We step in when things get hard, finish the task, extend the deadline, and talk to the adults; thus, kids don't know that in the normal course of life things won't always go their way, and that they'll be okay regardless. **7. An 18-year-old must be able to earn and manage money.** The crutch: They don't hold part-time jobs; they receive money from us for what ever they want or need; thus, kids don't develop a sense of responsibility for completing job tasks, accountability to a boss who doesn't inherently love them, or an appreciation for the cost of things and how to manage money. **8. An 18-year-old must be able to take risks.** The crutch: We've laid out their entire path for them and have avoided all pitfalls or prevented all stumbles for them; thus kids don't develop the wise understanding that success comes only after trying and failing and trying again (a.k.a. "grit") or the thick skin (a.k.a. "resilience") that comes from coping when things have gone wrong. Remember: our kids must be able to do all of these things without resorting to calling a parent on the phone. If they're calling us to ask how, they do not have the life skill.

Source: Julie Lythcot-Haims, Contributor, TODAY.com Jan. 25, 2016, and former Dean of Freshman at Stanford University and the author of "[How to Raise an Adult.](#)"



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with day and evening hours  
for your convenience.

## THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN CHANGE SOMEONE ELSE

*How can I get people to change?* I am asked this question a lot. It usually goes something like this: "I have really been focusing on shifting my perspective and thinking more abundant thoughts. But I am surrounded by people who are operating from a negative, lack-based mentality. So how do I get them to change?" My short answer is always: "You can't." Here is the longer answer behind the short response: Your life is a series of choices: choices made in every moment about what you desire, and about how you respond to the things that show up in your experience. As humans, this ability to choose is a fundamental aspect of our being. It's free will. Free will is how you create your life that you are living by choosing what works best for you. Let me repeat those last two sentences with emphasis on one key word: It's how *you* create *your* life that *you* are living. Life is far more

pleasant and peaceful when you can honor and respect that the behavior of others is not up to you. Allowing them to choose what works best for them, without any expectation or judgement about their choices, is how we can stop worrying about others and focus on the only factor that we can control. How do I now this? Well, I learned the hard way. When I first started to learn and apply some of the abundance-mindset principles, I was so excited by the dramatic improvement in my outlook and in the results that were showing up for me. I just wanted to share these principles with my loved ones who were suffering. My thinking was that if they could just be exposed to this information, then everything would begin to turn around for them, too. And let's be honest—I didn't want any bad mojo they were creating to counteract all the good mojo that I was creating. What I didn't

know is that this is not the way it works. All this approach did was to make me more frustrated when they didn't choose to adopt an abundance mindset for themselves. You can certainly create a Complaint-Free Zone, one where you ask the people in your daily life to leave any complaining, whining and gossiping at the door. But once you clearly communicate an expectation, it's time to let them decide whether they choose (or not) to meet you halfway. If they choose not to, and they might, then you get to choose how you will respond. It isn't easy, and wondering why someone doesn't react the way you want them to doesn't make you a bad person. Instead, you can model an abundance mindset (or whatever it is that you are tempting

attempting to share) through your own behavior. You can even share your thoughts and beliefs (ideally this only happens after first being invited). This may inspire another to change, but it may not. It's their choice—a function of their Free Will. This is how they create the life *they* are living—by choosing what works for *them*. When you think about it, would you really want it to be any other way?

Source: Holly Bretschneider, founder and Chief Inspiration Officer of Blue Sky Business Academy.

[www.holstee.com/blogs/mindful-matter/16800200-the-only-way-you-can-change-someone-else](http://www.holstee.com/blogs/mindful-matter/16800200-the-only-way-you-can-change-someone-else)